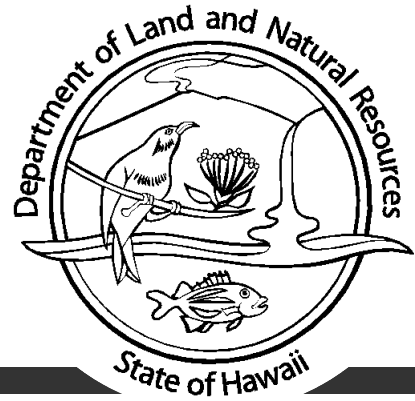


NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Bill Devick, 587-0010
Athline Clark, 587-0099
February 25, 2000
00-16



LAND BOARD APPROVES REQUEST FOR PUBLIC HEARING TO ESTABLISH FISHERY MANAGEMENT AREA IN NORTHWEST HAWAIIAN ISLANDS

Today the Board of Land and Natural Resources approved a request to hold public hearings on adopting new Hawai'i Administrative Rules, Chapter 13-60.5 to establish a Fisheries Management Area (FMA) in the Northwest Hawaiian Islands. The FMA is proposed to regulate certain types of activities in the NWHI and to require an entry permit from DLNR for access.

The establishment of a permit entry system will assert state control over access to all the unique and important resources in state waters within the NWHI, including: Hawaiian monk seal habitat, nesting grounds for the Hawaiian green sea turtle, coral reef ecosystems and feeding grounds for a variety of seabirds. The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands are also designated a National Wildlife Refuge managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

These remote islands are a pristine ecosystem where numerous types of endangered wildlife live. Many of these protected species depend on reef resources for their food source. There is a potential for significant impact to the wildlife resources from certain kinds of human activities. The establishment of the FMA allows the State to maintain management over the types of activities that can or cannot occur, also to assess the level of interest for these activities.

DLNR has been working for several months toward the establishment of the FMA due to an increased interest expressed among both certain segments of the fishing community and ecotourism companies, to gain access to the region. Limited fishing and ecotourism activities will be allowed as long as such activities are not destructive to the coral reef ecosystem or the unique wildlife that inhabit the region.

DLNR is responding, as required by law (HRS Chapter 91-6), to a petition from the Western Pacific Fisheries Coalition which requested the State to establish a regulatory framework to manage activities within the NWHI. The FMA establishes the regulatory framework for this region and is based on concerns for protecting the significant biological resources in the area.

The Department of Land and Natural Resources already has the statutory authority to establish permits or adopt rules relating to the taking of marine life in the Northwest Hawaiian Islands, where the action will not deplete the stocks of marine life in the area. The creation of the proposed FMA provides DLNR the additional authority to regulate and permit other activities in that area.

###